

Albany Pelican Tagging

In its ongoing study into pelicans in Western Australia the Wildlife Research Centre at Wanneroo recently conducted a tagging session at Albany.

At the western end of Princess Royal Harbour, cannon nets were used to capture 43 birds.

The birds were released immediately after being tagged, except for 8 which were tagged from previous encounters. These were closely examined and records taken. Each of these birds received a 20 minute inspection. This entailed measuring, feather counting and coloured wing tag application. One bird had previously come from Wittenoom.

The end results of the wing-tagging studies as opposed to banding and other pelican studies in progress help establish three things:

- Migration patterns.
- The age when they first breed.
- How regularly they keep to certain breeding spots.

The compiled results will help to ensure that these birds can be protected against any possible future man-made or environmental threat to their existence.

Interestingly, there's one curious by-product of these investigations—they help to determine the sex of the birds. Measuring the length of the beak and comparing it to the length of the tarsus (from the heel to the base of the toes) is the only simple way to determining if a pelican is male or female.

How long these birds live is still unknown, however, and it will be some years before the ongoing studies provide an answer.



Example of tag placing. If sighted, please advise the Department's Water Bird Research Branch of the colour and number.